



Community Benefit Fund guidelines

Renewable Energy Park – Horsham

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Acknowledgment of country

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.

Contents

1.	About SEC.....	3
2.	About the Renewable Energy Park - Horsham.....	3
3.	About the Community Benefit Fund.....	3
4.	Objectives of the Fund.....	3
5.	Criteria.....	3
6.	Eligibility	4
7.	Available funding	5
7.1	Funding.....	5
7.2	Co-contribution amount.....	5
8.	Application assessment.....	6
8.1	Assessment	6
8.2	Applicant checks	7
8.3	Notification of application outcome	7
9.	Publicity/acknowledgement of support	7
10.	Conflict of interest.....	7
11.	Information only	7
12.	Privacy statement.....	7

1. About SEC

SEC is a government-owned renewable energy company. We are accelerating Victoria's renewable energy transition by working to deliver renewable, affordable, reliable energy for all Victorians. We're doing this in three main ways:

- Investing in large scale assets to deliver 4.5 gigawatts of renewable energy and storage.
- Providing Victorian businesses and industry with retail and wholesale electricity solutions to help them decarbonise.
- Supporting households to go all-electric to reduce their energy bills and emissions.

2. About the Renewable Energy Park - Horsham

The SEC Renewable Energy Park – Horsham (HREP) is a 100% publicly owned utility-scale renewable energy project located in Riverside, just outside of Horsham.

HREP includes a 119-megawatt solar farm comprising more than 212,000 PV solar panels, and a 100MW two-hour battery energy storage system (BESS). Once fully operational in 2027, HREP will generate around 242,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of renewable energy a year – enough to power 51,000 homes.

3. About the Community Benefit Fund

HREP's community benefit fund (the Fund) seeks to deliver long-term, positive outcomes for the Horsham local government area (LGA). The Fund will support community-led initiatives that celebrate local ideas alongside the development and operation of HREP.

In 2026, during HREP's construction phase, the Fund will invest \$126,000 in the Horsham LGA to support local initiatives that strengthen connections, encourage collaboration and support inclusive participation in the community.

Applications will open 29 June 2026 and close at 11:50pm 24 August 2026.

Once HREP begins commercial operations in late 2027, the Fund will invest \$3 million – or \$100,000 annually (indexed) – into the local community over the project's 30-year operational life. Operation-phase funding will support multi-year initiatives that deliver long-term, legacy outcomes for the region.

4. Objectives of the Fund

The objectives of the Fund are to:

- Strengthen social cohesion and community inclusion to support increased participation in community life.
- Increase the capacity of groups and organisations to support increased mental, physical, emotional and economic wellbeing and resilience amongst residents, vulnerable communities and young people.
- Support the region's ability to respond and adapt to changes in the climate and deliver environmentally sustainable projects.

5. Criteria

The Fund will only consider grant projects:

- That clearly align with and contribute to one or more of the Fund objectives as set out in item 4 above.
- That are delivered by an eligible applicant as outlined in item 6.1 below.
- Which meet the below project eligibility requirements as set out in item 6.4 below.

6. Eligibility

6.1 Eligible applicant requirements

To be eligible to receive funding under the Fund, each applicant must:

- Be located or operate within the Horsham local government area (LGA).
- Be a charity, not-for-profit organisation, non-government organisation or community group.
- Have an ABN or have an auspice body.
- Submit a proposal for a project which aligns with the funding priorities outlined in this document.
- Apply for funding in respect of a specific project (not general funding).
- Have the required permits and organisational approvals for the project to proceed.

6.2 Auspice arrangements

Applicants located in the Horsham LGA who are not incorporated entities and/or do not have a current valid ABN, may apply using an auspice arrangement.

An auspice arrangement is where another organisation (“auspisor”) agrees to enter into the grant agreement on behalf of the applicant (“auspicee”) and be responsible for the acquittal of the agreement.

The auspisor accepts responsibility for the grant project and will agree to comply with all obligations under the grant agreement entered into to receive the grant.

Applicants are required to include a statement of support from their auspisor as part of the application process.

6.3 Ineligible applicants

The following types of applicants are not eligible for funding:

- Australian, Victorian or other state or local government agencies or bodies.
- A for-profit company.
- An individual or sole trader.
- An incorporated trustee on behalf of a trust.
- An individual partner on behalf of a partnership.
- A political party.
- An incorporated joint venture.
- A consortia application with a lead organisation.

6.4 Project eligibility requirements

The proposed grant project must:

- Be delivered by an eligible applicant as defined under Item 6.1 above.
- Be delivered in the Horsham LGA.
- Be capable of completion within 18 months of the grant agreement being executed.
- Have one or more of the following attributes:
 - Deliver lasting benefits to the Horsham LGA.
 - Support the region’s ability to respond and adapt to changes in the climate and deliver environmentally sustainable projects.
 - Increase the capacity of groups and organisations to support increased mental, physical, emotional and economic wellbeing and resilience amongst residents, vulnerable communities and young people.
 - Strengthen social cohesion and community inclusion to support increased participation in community life.
 - Not be an example of an ineligible project as outlined in Item 6.5 below.
 - Meet any additional program-specific requirements as set out in these guidelines.

Examples of eligible grant projects:

- Organising and running community events, activities or programs.
- Investment in community capacity-building initiatives such as workshops, skill-building or knowledge sharing.
- Small scale upgrades to community facilities, amenities or spaces.
- Development of community resources such as guides, tool libraries or other shared materials.
- Purchasing or hiring equipment and resources required to deliver community benefits.

6.5 Ineligible projects

The following activities and projects will not be considered for funding and the applicants may not use any of the below for funding:

- Projects that do not meet the objectives and outcomes of the program.
- Funding for administration or operating costs (e.g. utility costs) that is more than 25% of the total activity.
- Funding for expenses or activities that are the responsibility of another government (local, state or federal).
- Retrospective funding for projects that have already started or have been completed.
- Political organisations or campaigns, or religious activities.
- Any amount paid on account of goods and services tax.
- Repayment of debts and loans.
- Salaries.
- Purchase of equipment/service for an individual.
- Costs related to preparing the grant application and preparing any project reports.
- Alcohol, drugs, gambling or illegal or unethical activities.

7. Available funding

7.1 Funding contributions

In 2026, the Fund will accept applications for one-off grants of up to \$25,000 per proposed grant project (exclusive of GST).

Applicants are required to contribute a minimum of 20% toward the proposed grant project budget (co-contribution amount) with up to 50% of this co-contribution amount coming from in-kind contributions (as outlined in section 7.2 below).

Details of possible co-contribution scenarios, including financial and in-kind contributions, are outlined below.

7.2 Co-contribution amount

Co-contribution amounts may come from the applicant or from other sources but must not be from other Victorian Government sources or programs.

Financial contributions

Accepted sources of financial co-contributions may include:

- Contributions from community groups, businesses, or philanthropic organisations.
- Grants or contributions from local government or the Australian Government.
- Contributions from utility or service providers.

In-kind contributions

Accepted sources of in-kind co-contributions may include:

- Professionals costed at \$80-\$150 per hour.
- Skilled labour costed at \$45 per hour.
- Unskilled labour costed at \$25 per hour.
- Equipment costed at standard commercial hire rates.

Volunteer hours may be included using the above rates.

Co-contribution budget example

A community group applicant's total project cost is \$10,000. The applicant can apply for an \$8,000 grant but would have to contribute a further \$2,000 from other sources. The applicant also has the option of nominating 50% of the contribution as in-kind contribution (being \$1,000).

The total proposed project budget could then be:

\$8,000 – SEC grant

\$1,000 – other cash contributions

\$1,000 – in-kind support.

8. Application assessment

Applications will:

- Open on 29 June July 2026.
- Close at 11:50pm on 24 August 2026.

Applications must be submitted electronically via the application form at www.secvictoria.com.au/horsham.

Late applications will not be accepted.

An application will only be assessed if it meets the project eligibility requirements and is submitted by an eligible applicant.

Applications will be assessed competitively against the criteria listed below by a panel made up of local representatives, including residents and community-focused organisations.

8.1 Assessment

Applications assessed as eligible will undergo a competitive assessment process based on the assessment criteria below.

These assessments will identify and rank applications that are most strongly aligned with the Fund objectives, demonstrate a clear connection and benefit to the community and value for money.

All supplementary attachments and information provided as part of the application will be taken into consideration during the assessment process.

Assessment criteria	Considerations	Weighting
Project alignment How well the proposed project aligns with the Fund objectives	The extent to which the application demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear alignment with one or more objectives of the Fund. - Improvements to community wellbeing and/or social connection. - Improvements to social cohesion and opportunities to create social inclusion. - A contribution to environmental sustainability or climate adaptation outcomes (where relevant). - Clear demonstration of a lasting impact on the region. 	30%
Demand and need for the project The local opportunity, need or challenge the project is looking to address, the project's feasibility and likely future use.	The extent to which the application demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clearly identified community need, challenge and/or opportunity that the project addresses. - Local demand for the project (e.g. community input, engagement or support). - Responsiveness to community priorities. 	30%
Project readiness and organisational capability The applicant's ability to implement and manage the project.	The extent to which the application demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A clear plan for project delivery within 18 months including any significant project milestones and risks; - That the organisation has the capacity and capability to manage and execute the project, or has partnered with an organisation who does. - That the organisation has or is in the process of acquiring any permits, approvals or permissions required to deliver the planned project. 	30%
Value for money	The extent to which the application demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That the applicant has the means to meet its co-contribution (financial and in-kind) requirements; - The project demonstrates long-term community value without ongoing reliance on grant funding; - The project budget is reasonable, accurate and based on sound cost estimates or quotes. - The funding requested is appropriate for the expected outcomes. 	10%

Important: This grant is a competitive process and limited to the amount of funds available. Applicants are not guaranteed funding and not guaranteed full funding.

8.2 Applicant checks

During the assessment process applicants may be subject to due diligence assessments to enable the assessment of financial and other non-financial risks associated with the application. Outcomes from these assessments may be considered in any decision to recommend or award a grant and in contracting with successful applicants.

These checks may include:

- Assessment of the potential for reputational risk to SEC or SEC's shareholders.
- Whether the proposal has already been fully funded by the applicant through other means.
- A review of the applicant's delivery performance of grants previously contracted with the Victorian Government.
- A regulator check.
- Contact by SEC with organisations to discuss their application to gain a better appreciation of the proposal.

8.3 Notification of application outcome

Applicants will be advised of the outcome of their grant application via email. The outcome will be shared within 6 months after applications close.

9. Publicity

If successful and where required, the grant recipient will be supplied with a logo suite and associated brand guidelines, as well as a guide on how to acknowledge SEC's support.

SEC may include the name of the recipient organisation in its annual report and on digital channels including media, website and social media.

10. Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which someone in a position of trust or influence has competing or perceived competing professional or personal interests. Applicants must inform SEC of any real or perceived conflict of interest relating to a project for which it has applied for funding.

11. Information only

Any discussions an applicant may have had with an SEC representative are for information only, and do not constitute advice. Applicants should seek independent advice before making an application or entering into a grant agreement.

12. Privacy statement

Any personal information provided in an application for this program will be collected and used for the purposes of assessing eligibility, program administration, program review and evaluation.

SEC completes a range of eligibility assessments that may include data matching to clarify the accuracy and quality of information supplied. This is part of our auditing and monitoring processes and for confirming eligibility across this program.

In the assessment of an application, it may be necessary to share personal information with other external experts. If personal information about a third party is included in the application, the applicant must ensure the third party is aware of and consents to the contents of this privacy statement.

The relevant department collects demographic information for economic reporting purposes. No personal information is used in reporting; all reports are presented with aggregated data.

Any personal information about the applicant or a third party will be collected, held, managed, used, disclosed, or transferred in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)* and other applicable laws.